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Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 10:51 AM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 7015

I submitting testimony in support house Bill 7015

My name is Dr. Linda Alexander. I am a physician, a board certified internist and a cancer survivor and I support ophysicians AID in DYING

I think many physicians graduate from school with the grand illusion that their role is to save lives. I was going to prevent people from getting sick. I suppose I did some of that over the years. But it was the ones who asked me for assistance with their suffering that I could not provide that really affected me.

Over the years I was blessed to touch many lives and of course I was there for many deaths. We physicians have no power to beat death but the comfort we can provide is among the greatest gifts anyone can give. That's our real job as physicians and it is much harder than heroically saving lives. But there were times that the patient's suffering is long and intractable that filled my heart with grief. This is what many people do not want to admit occurs. There is no question that some of us are granted lives that are easier than that of others. The same is true of death. Who wouldn't like to die peacefully in their sleep without pain or suffering? But not everyone is granted an easy peaceful death.

Many people develop nausea from the pain meds and feel that the distress from the drugs is worse than the pain. They suffer greatly emotionally and physically as the drugs are juggled before they are finally able to rest in peace. They lose control of their bodily functions and it is not pleasant or pretty. Family and friends and even medical professionals look the other way because they can't stand to see their loved one "like that". They don't go to the hospital or the nursing facility or the house at these times.

And everyone's approach and feelings about dying are different. Some people are able to endure much more than others and the chance to live one more day or see loved ones again keeps them going. No one should deny them every last possible day or hour.

Others suffer much more and those who deny this are abandoning their loved ones when they need the most support. They chose not to see, to leave the room or place their family member in a place where they don't have to look at them. Read the obituaries. They say the person passed peacefully surrounded by loved ones. No one wants to read of the suffering and difficulty experienced.

Hospice is a wonderful organization who has provided comfort to patients and families. They will tell you how their methods and skills enable patients to continue to enjoy life despite their illness. Much of that is true but it doesn't tell the whole story. You have to read the last chapter that no one wants to see. For many people there comes a time when the suffering and loss of control is just too much to bear and it is heartbreaking. I know. I have been there. With patients, family, friends, family of friends. I've often been the one who goes to visit when some family members can't take it anymore. Many people wish they had the assistance that this legislation would provide or they hope to have it in the future for themselves and their loved ones.

Times and attitudes changed and now we have the opportunity to allow each person to choose their own path and die with peace and dignity. Not everyone will need or want special assistance from a physician at the end of their life. But for those that do I encourage our lawmakers to make that possible so that all may die in the way they choose.